

Selected Items From the History of Pathology

Vincenzo Tiberio (1869–1915) was a pioneer in the field of chemoantibiotic therapy because of his early observations on bacterial substances produced by fungi. Born in 1869, into a poor family in Sepino (Campobasso, Italy), he was graduated from the medical school in Naples at the age of 22 and immediately became assistant professor in the Institute of Medical Demonstrative Pathology.

At the Institute, focusing his research on molds, he published the results of his investigations in the *Annali d'Igiene Sperimentale*, dated January 1, 1895.¹ His study was one of the most complete of a number of similar experiments done in the field of chemotherapy in the late nineteenth century.

Unfortunately his scientific career was interrupted when he was called to serve in the Italian army. Honored by the Italian government for his services as soldier and physician, he returned to his work in 1913. Receiving neither acceptance of nor recognition for his research on molds, he died in 1915 of a myocardial infarct.

The following excerpt (translated) from his original research, published in 1895, summarizes his thought:

It is clear from these observations that in the cellular substance of the examined molds there are some water-soluble compounds that have bactericidal action: It should be pointed out that the substances obtained from the *Aspergillus flavus* are more active than those obtained from the *Mucor mucedo* and *Penicillium glaucum*. . . . I do not intend to say that this anti-bactericidal action of these substances is equally effective on all bacteria.

He was a man ahead of his time.

Contributed by A. Coppola, MD, and
E. Viggiani, MD
Downstate Medical Center
State University of New York
Brooklyn, New York

Reference

1. Tiberio, Vincenzo: Sugli estratti di alcune muffe. *Annali d'Igiene Sperimentale* 1895, 1:91–103